

## 20. A PECULIAR FOOD FINDING HABIT OF HOUSE CROW *CORVUS SPLENDENS* (VIELLOT)

One fine morning in November 1993, at Himayatnagar, Hyderabad, I had the opportunity to observe a pair of house crows *Corvus splendens* (Viellot) from a porch at about 0700-0800 hrs. The pair alighted in a hurried manner on a small temple tree (*Plumeria acutifolia*) and searched for something, as if they had hidden some food material earlier. To my great surprise one of the crows pulled out the semi-dried sticky latex of the temple tree and devoured it quickly.

Since my landlords required fresh flowers of this plant for their daily *puja* (worship) they used a long bamboo stick to remove the flowers. While doing this many branches of this weak plant broke easily and the latex oozed out profusely to seal the injury, by covering the

broken tips. It could easily be guessed from the food habits of these birds that their intelligence might have prompted them to acquire knowledge of the availability of the latex on these plants. They may have chosen the latex as an easy source of food. Later I noticed that these crows regularly visit temple trees, specially after the winter leaf-fall, which might be helping them to locate the semi-dried latex easily due to the bareness of the branches. It had become part of their daily food finding activity.

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## 21. SMALLER GREY CUCKOO-SHRIKE (*CORACINA MELASCHISTOS*) SIGHTED AT PILLUR FORESTS, NILGIRI HILLS, TAMIL NADU

Pillur forest is situated on the southeastern slopes of the Nilgiris and supports a moderately disturbed dry mixed-deciduous forest. While surveying the forest for small carnivores, I saw a smaller grey cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina melaschistos*).

On 28th September, 1995 around 1100 hrs, I was walking along the road to Neeralipallam weir. At about 200 m from the Parali Valve House, I saw a smaller grey cuckoo-shrike, perched upright on a branch in the lower canopy of a tree. It was dull in plumage and looked to me like a smaller version of a female fairy bluebird in silhouette. When I got close to it, it flew over me to a nearby tree, and perched facing me, now in good light. It was dark grey all over

with black wings, darker eye-stripe and faintly barred underparts.

This species is an altitudinal migrant in the Himalayas, wintering in the Terai and the adjacent plains, and straggling in the Peninsula as far as Karnataka (Ali and Ripley, 1987 COMPACT HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, OUP.). There are no previous records of this species from Nilgiris or Tamil Nadu in literature.

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## 22. GOLDMANTLED CHLOROPSIS (*CHLOROPSIS COCHINCHINENSIS*) FEEDING ON RAW POTATO CHIPS

On 16th March, 1995, a pair of goldmantled chloropsis was seen foraging amongst the foliage

of a mango tree (*Mangifera indica*). The male flew away and returned after a few seconds,